

Welcome to Latvia!





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INTRODUCTION TO
LATVIA

Introduction to Latvia

Latvia, often called the pearl of the Baltic States, is one of the EU (European Union) member states. Latvia has a 531km long coastline along the Baltic Sea and is bordered by Estonia, Lithuania, Russia, and Belarus.

The flag of Latvia is composed with 2 colors, dark red, and white. On June 15, 1921 the modern flag of Latvia became the official national flag.



Latvia in Europe

Quick Facts on Latvia:

- Capital: Rīga
- Geographical size: 64,562 km²
- Population: 2,044,813 (2012)
- GDP: €22.257 billion (2012)
- Official Language: Latvian
- EU member country since: 1 May 2004
- Currency: Euros since 1 January 2014

Cultural Historic Heritage

Latvia has a rich cultural heritage and an ancient language. Latvian dainas (folksongs) are very historic, and it is estimated

that there are over a million, many hundreds of years old. They are known to be listed in the UNESCO List of Global Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Beautiful architectural castles, manor houses, churches, and cathedrals can be found every where in Latvia. There are more than 30 castles and manor houses, most dating back to the 13th and 14th centuries. Latvia is especially famous for its Art Nouveau architecture. It is known that Latvia has the largest collection of Art Nouveau buildings in Northern Europe, most dating from the 1890s.



Art Nouveau architecture in Rīga

Nature

Latvia is one of the greenest countries in Europe. It is home to many different wild animals, birds, and plants which makes it a popular site for nature tourism.

Latvia has a long coast of white sand beaches where the sea breeze is always fresh. Latvia's beach resorts are a great place to spend summers with families and friends.



Liepāja beach

Latvia has a total of 4 national parks, 42 nature parks, 4 nature reserves, 1 biosphere reserve, and 2 historic botanical gardens where people can enjoy the scent of nature at peace.



Snowman statue in a park in Rīga

Weather

Latvia's weather conditions are strongly influenced by the Baltic Sea, therefore the climate is relatively mild and humid through out the year.

Latvia has all four seasons, spring, summer, fall, and winter.

Winter usually starts in December and ends in March. During winter there are several activities to enjoy, including ice fishing, skiing, skating, etc.

Spring usually starts in March or April. In March, nature starts to wake while the migratory birds come back to Latvia.



Flowers in a park in Rīga

Summer in Latvia goes from June to August. Temperature tends to rise the highest, up to 35°C, in July. The average temperature during the summer is around 19°C.

During autumn, leaves on trees turn red and yellow creating a beautiful sight. It is the season where rainfall comes frequently. Migratory birds leave to warmer countries in autumn as well.

Local Cuisine

Latvian food is natural and organic which makes it very healthy and fresh.

The most common ingredient in traditional Latvian food is meat, some dishes include sausages, roasted meat, and smoked meat. Vegetarian dishes include potato pancakes, beetroot salads, and bean soups.

Some traditional desserts are Biguzis (black bread pudding with whipped cream and berries), Buberts (whisked egg and semolina pudding), and honey cake.

Some popular drinks served with meals include beer, milk, kefir, kvass, birch sap and herbal teas.

Rīga Black Balsam is one of Latvia's most popular alcoholic drinks and it is bought by several tourists as a souvenir.



Rīga Black Balsam

Public Transportation

When travelling around Latvia, trains and buses are a good method of regional transportation to use. It gives the chance to see the beautiful views of the countryside, forests, and farms in Latvia.

In Rīga there are trams, trolleybuses, and city buses as public transportation. Tickets can be bought at €0.60 in Rīgas Satiksmes (Rīga Transport) ticket offices, public transport ticket machines, or at Narvesen stores. Tickets directly bought from drivers will cost €1.20. More information can be found at the Rīga Transport Authority's official website www.rigassatiksmelv

